

LAOS

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NOR647 EPF414
1422 : INDOCHINA - SECRECY:
(360--TWO TAKES)

WASHINGTON, JUNE 8, REUTER--SEN. J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT TODAY CHARGED THE STATE DEPARTMENT WAS USING SEMANTIC TRICKERY IN DESCRIBING AS VOLUNTEERS THE THAI FORCES THE UNITED STATES IS FINANCING TO FIGHT IN LAOS.

AS THE CONTROVERSY OVER SECRET SENATE SESSION MONDAY ON LAOS CONTINUED TO SIMMER, THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE STATE DEPARTMENT EXPLANATIONS USED DURING ITS FIRST FORMAL PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE U.S. IS FINANCING USE OF THAI TROOPS IN THE LAOTIAN WAR.

FULBRIGHT SAID THAT TO DESCRIBE THE ORGANIZED THAI FORCES AS VOLUNTEERS RECRUITED FROM ETHNIC THAIS LIVING IN LAOS WAS SIMILAR TO PEKING LABELING AS VOLUNTEERS THE THOUSANDS OF TROOPS IT POURED INTO THE KOREAN WAR.

"THIS SEMANTIC TRICKERY IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH IN A REASONABLE MANNER," THE ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT TOLD REPORTERS.

FULBRIGHT CHALLENGED THE ADMINISTRATION'S ARGUMENT THAT FINANCING THAI FORCES TO FIGHT IN NORTHERN LAOS DID NOT VIOLATE CONGRESSIONAL RESTRICTIONS BECAUSE THE MEASURE, PASSED LAST YEAR, CONTAINED A CLAUSE ALLOWING USE OF SUCH FORCES IN LAOS TO HELP PROTECT THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM.

"YOU CAN STRETCH THAT KIND OF LANGUAGE BEYOND ALL REASONS," FULBRIGHT SAID.

HE SAID THE 4,800-MAN CONTINGENT WAS LARGELY RECRUITED IN THAILAND. THEY INCLUDED REGULAR THAI ARMY SOLDIERS, HE SAID, WERE UNDER THE COMMAND OF THAI OFFICERS AND RECEIVED SOME SPECIAL PAY BENEFITS.

MORE NV MP/DM

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HE SAID IT WAS A MISREPRESENTATION TO TRY TO PORTRAY THEM AS LOCALLY RECRUITED THAIS LIVING IN LAOS, VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT THE ROYAL LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT IN ITS BATTLES WITH THE COMMUNIST-BACKED PATHET LAO.

THE RARE CLOSED-DOOR SENATE SESSION MONDAY HEARD SOME DETAILS OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS WITH SOME OF THE INFORMATION COMING FROM A STILL-CLASSIFIED REPORT BY TWO SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE INVESTIGATORS WHO VISITED LAOS IN APRIL.

REUTER NV MP/DM

These comments represent the initial and tentative reaction of the Office of Current Intelligence to the attached item from the news services.